

ARTANARKI

ART : NEWS & REVIEWS / USE & ABUSE

04.30.2010

UNLOCKING PANDORA'S BOX REAM BY REAM, BY DEBLINA CHAKRABARTY

Categories: [Contemporary Art and Exhibitions](#)



I had no difficulty assimilating Naranendra Yadav's day job as an ad-man with his artist self. The name of his exhibition which opened at Gallery Maskara on 20th April 2010 had all the makings of a neat slogan or brand slug, Memory Minus Me. It is alliterative, evocative and begs further exploration. Happily Narendra Yadav the artist doesn't disappoint.

The title work Memory Minus Me has neatly arranged cutting *chai* glasses holding sepia-tinted photographs which could as easily come from our own past as from the *raddi* pile (which they in fact do). The pasta maker placed at the corner urges one to shred these pictures and decimate the predictable structure of nostalgia pictures like these evoke so that the resulting pile of shredded paper can develop its own new meaning devoid of the baggage of collective memory, both our own and others. Despite being an installation about memory, there is something forlorn about these neat rows of glasses which upturn the widely-held notion that memories bring comfort and company; sometimes all they create are larger lacunae perhaps?



Memory Minus Me, 2010

Anonymous Pictures roughly from 1913 till 1970,

Pasta Maker, Kaleidoscope, Wooden table and Variable Projection.

36 x 168 x 42 in

Holding Back the Tears is my favourite piece in this show. A variety of colourful hand-knitted children's sweaters flutter against the vast white gallery wall, very reminiscent of Tibetan prayer flags against the stark Himalayan peaks. The sweaters are instant nostalgia because there is no one who hasn't had one of these earnest symbols of love and protection knitted for them by grandmothers, aunts, mothers etc which now lie in unused and forgotten in some dusty trunk in the family home. And yet they are repositories of a halcyon childhood (never mind if it was all truly halcyon or not!). And that's why Yadav so ingeniously links the stray yarns of these sweaters to a central spindle and urges us to turn its handle and slowly unravel these memory honeycombs so that we can set ourselves free of what we're supposed to remember and feel, and get to what we *really* remember and feel. The participatory nature of this installation is as real as its cathartic, while visually, the mounting is vibrant and thought-provoking.



Awareness, 2010

Resin, Handy Cam and Motor

62 x 60 x 42 in

Yadav takes a great risk in his next piece *That Original May Also Be A Reflection* since along with masks, mirror reflections are the next most hackneyed, overused and abused representational devices in art and popular culture. But somehow he manages to pull it off without making it banal (even though it's a tad obvious). You enter a cubicle masked in black cloth and stand on a marked spot whereby the two mirrors positioned at a 45 degree angle to each other slowly open out, thereby multiplying your image to eight before they again close in, eventually reducing the reflection to nothing. The hypnotic slow motion of the mirrors could be the progression of our own lives as we start adding layers, personae and facades as we go along life; either out of fear, anger, necessity or compromise. And then as life ebbs out (either really or metaphorically) we slowly realize the futility of those facades and wearily shed them one by one till not even one is left. All we are left with is our internal sense of self and acceptance of it.



Holding Back the Tears, 2010

Woolen Sweaters and Hand Drill Machine

75 x 192 x 12 in

There are other pieces like *C'eci N'est Pas Une Peur* with a foetus in an oven which represents the cusp between life and death and *Awareness* which is a fiberglass headless blue bull mastiff with an arm holding a handycam representing the mindless chaotic need to capture images which have no story to tell, that sums up Yadav's attempt to examine and deconstruct the role of memory in our lives especially that which is secondary, handed down and templated. And despite the surface simplicity of his works and their individual messages, one walks away from *Memory Minus Me* having added a question mark to their own memory stash. And that's definitely a plus for a show like this!



Holding Back the Tears, 2010

Woolen Sweaters and Hand Drill Machine

75 x 192 x 12 in